

VLR-10/16/90 NRHP-12/6/90

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 18). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name at Property

historic name COCKRAM MILL other names/site number DHR File 70-06

2. Location

street & number U. S. Route 58 city, town Meadows of Dan state Virginia code VA county Patrick code 141 zip code 24120

3. Classification

Table with 3 columns: Ownership of Property, Category of Property, and Number of Resources within Property. Includes checkboxes for private/public ownership and building/site/structure/object categories.

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 38 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official: [Signature] Date: 24 Oct 1990 Director, Virginia Department of Historic Resources

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY/PROCESSING:

Manufacturing Facility

Energy Facility

DOMESTIC: Single dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY/PROCESSING:

Manufacturing Facility

DOMESTIC: Single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

NO STYLE

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Wood: Weatherboard

roof Metal: Tin

other Wooden Porch

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Cockram Mill is a rectangular, 111'x 24', two- and three-story gristmill situated on a concrete foundation which also includes a basement. It is a frame building clad in white-painted weatherboard and capped by a tin gable roof. A wooden porch extends around three sides of the building. The mill is located beside a concrete dam at the headwaters of the Dan River on Highway 58 in Patrick County, Virginia fifteen miles northwest of the courthouse in Stuart. The mill is operated by two metal turbine wheels, 14' and 16' in diameter, which are located beneath the east porch closest to the dam.

The mill is located on a 23.4 acre tract of land, 13 acres of which are within the compass of this nomination, owned by Double W of Maryland, an investment corporation of which William Harlis Webb is Executive director. Acreage includes a millpond of approximately ten acres. Other buildings located on the tract include a miller's house, which is counted as contributing, built around 1921 by W.A. Cockram for his dwelling (now a deli and craft shop) and a store (non-contributing) built by Shirley Mitchell in 1964 (now an antique shop).

The mill's exact date of construction is not known; however, in 1808, Thomas Dehart operated a gristmill just 500 feet downstream. Jesse Blackard bought this gristmill and the land where the current mill is located in 1885. Tax records do not seem to indicate when the current mill was built. From 1885 they record the assessed value of a mill, fixtures, and land, with no substantial increase in value that the building of a new mill would precipitate. A tobacco box from the factory at the later mill dated 1895 indicates that the mill was in operation by that time.

At the time of construction the current mill included a 32'x 24' three-story section (section 1 as shown on the sketch map) situated over a basement and a 25'x 24' two-story section (section 2 on sketch map). The south porch features two chutes which extend into the basement of the three-story section and are used for the conveyance of grain. The westernmost chute was designed to convey corn on the cob from the basement, while the easternmost chute was designed to convey shelled corn, rye, and buckwheat.

In the basement, there are pulleys and a conveyor system which conveys the various grains to their storage areas on the second

See continuation sheet

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY

Period of Significance

1885-1940

Significant Dates

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Blackard, Jesse

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Cockram Mill is an example of a historic gristmill, built around 1885, that produced cornmeal, grits, buckwheat flour, rye, livestock feed, wooden boxes, lumber, and electricity by the utilization of water power. It was unique within the local Appalachian area because it was built with mass production in mind and had two turbine wheels instead of the common overshot wheels. The mill introduced to the area such innovative processes as the ability to clean and shell grain. The mill was also the first and only facility in the area to produce, on a private basis, electricity for sale during the 1930s.

JUSTIFICATION OF CRITERIA

Cockram Mill is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its significance as a representative example of late nineteenth-century mill design and technology. It is one of the few largely intact gristmills known to survive in good condition in this area of the state.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

When Jesse Blackard built the mill around 1885, he had had experience in running the more common overshot wheel at a mill he had bought some five hundred feet downstream. These types of mills were common in the area and Mabry Mill, built in 1910 about two miles away, still operates as an example of this type of mill. These mills were usually owned and run by one person or a family and operated as neighbors requested the service. Blackard wanted automated, large-scale production so he utilized two turbine wheels at his facility. He not only ground grain on request but also distributed his products to small stores within the immediate

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

"America's Finest Authentic Old Mill", Highway to Finer Living with Hennis Freight Lines, February 1966. (Author unknown, copy with Loula Mae Cockram, Vesta, Virginia.)

Patrick County Land Books and Tax Books. Patrick County Courthouse. Stuart, VA.

Interviews:

Fred Clifton. Vesta, VA. Area Historian. July 4, 1987.

Ann Cockram. Meadows of Dan, VA. May 5, 1988.

Tigg and Loula Mae Cockram. Vesta, VA. Millers for twenty-five years at Cockram Mill. August 4, 1987, October 5, 1987, November 20, 1987, March 11, 1988.

Eula and Martin Marshall. Laurel Fork, VA. October 7, 1987.

Dorn Spangler. Meadows of Dan, VA. Former Patrick County School Superintendent and local historian. July 2, 1988.

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

VA Department of Historic Resources
221 Governor St., Richmond, VA 23219

10. Geographical Data

Acres of property 13 acres

UTM References

A
 Zone Easting Northing

C

B
 Zone Easting Northing

D

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the nominated property is circumscribed by the polygon whose vertices are marked by the following UTM reference points: A: 17/555560/4065890, B: 17/555400/4065380, C: 17/555050/4065540, D: 17/555050/4065620, and E: 17/555420/4065960. The actual boundaries are delineated on the accompanying USGS map, Meadows of Dan quadrangle.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundaries include the three acres surrounding the mill and its associated buildings and the ten-acre millpond.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Lynn Terry date January 25, 1990

organization Cockram Mill Folklife Center telephone 804-471-7447

street & number 1925 Grey Friars Chase state Virginia zip code 23456

city or town Virginia Beach

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floor. The basement is constructed of concrete block walls and cement floors. It features exposed wooden ceiling beams and originally had a sawmill under the two-story section of the mill.

The first floor features 1 1/4" oak tongue-and-groove board floors and has post and beam construction. Plywood walls were added by Shirley Mitchell during the 1964 renovation. The ceilings are eight feet high. There are three sets of grinding (or mill) stones; one each for corn, rye, and buckwheat. The rye millstone was replaced in 1964 but the other remain intact. The granite stones came from Mount Airy, North Carolina and are encased by a circular pine frame with a wooden hopper overhead. There are bins for the collection of various flours and chutes for the collection of bran by-product. These chutes, along with conveyors, were added in 1964. In this large room there are seven windows, an exterior door, a door to the two-story section, stairs to the basement, stairs to the second floor, and a brick chimney which is no longer serviceable. The facility was originally heated with a wood stove, but now a propane gas heater is used.

Jesse Blackard operated a planer on the first floor of the two-story section as well as a box factory. He sold a one-quarter interest in the sawmill and box factory to Jesse Reynolds for \$500 in 1896. During the 1964 renovation, this section was turned into a bagging and storage area. It has plywood walls and exposed 2"x 8" floor joists overhead. There is a counter positioned along the entire north wall that was added in 1964. The chutes for carrying grain for storage on the second floor come up through the middle of the floor.

The third section of the mill (section 3 on the sketch map), is a 54'x 24' room added in 1964 and is currently used for storage. It is of post and beam construction with plywood walls and six-inch-wide yellow pine board floors. A large beam runs the span of the Fifty-four-foot long room and is supported by two large posts.

The second floor of the three-story section features ceilings that are eight feet high. The original equipment located there includes an 1879 Forrester Company buckwheat shucker, a grain scourer, a W.J. Savage Co. corn cleaner, a corn sifter, a buckwheat sifter, and a rye sifter. There are also drive belts in this area. In the northeast corner is a small screened storage area.

The third floor of the three-story section is a 12'x 8' loft with four small windows and plywood floors which houses the mill's pulleys and drive belts.

The second floor of the two-story section consists of five storage bins that are screened-in for grain storage.

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A standing seam metal gable roof covers the three-story section of the mill, while a shed roof, also of tin, covers the other sections.

The two turbine wheels located beneath the east porch are original and were capable of operating the three sets of millstones, the former sawmill and planer, and producing sufficient electricity for twelve households. Electricity for the operation of the gristmill was added during the 1964 renovation to ensure dependable operation of the mill as a tourist attraction. The turbines have always been capable of meeting production demand, however, and electricity has only been used when the turbines need repair, usually after a period of infrequent use.

As noted, the mill sits on the headwaters of the Dan River. The original owner, Jesse Blackard, constructed a wooden dam that created a pond to power the mill. W.A. Cockram purchased the mill in 1921. After the dam washed out several times because of flood waters, he replaced it with a concrete dam in 1932. Cockram also did extensive work on the mill's foundations at that time. (The concrete dam required periodic repair but remained intact until late July, 1990, when it was washed out by high water. The turbines remained intact. The damage has been evaluated by an engineer and plans to replace the dam are underway. In the meantime, the mill continues to operate under electric power.)

Mr. Cockram also had a generator house built at the dam during the 1930s. At that time, power was not available in the community, so his generator house produced power for twelve households for approximately ten years. (When electrification came to the area in the early 1940s, the power company purchased this facet of Mr. Cockram's operation.)

The miller's house, built about 1921, is a 1 1/2 story frame structure with a basement, a standing-seam metal roof, a full front porch and an oversized, central dormer.

Major repairs were done on the mill in 1964 by Joe Terry, a local millwright. After these repairs the new owner, Shirley Mitchell, produced buckwheat, rye, and cornmeal at the facility for about fifteen years. In 1984 Double W of Maryland bought the facility, which had been vacant for sometime, and again major repairs were effected including repair of the foundation and dam and work on the drive mechanisms.

The National Park Service is currently leasing the mill to produce cornmeal, grits, and buckwheat while major repairs are being made at Mabry Mill on the Blue Ridge Parkway. The millers note that the mill is great working order.

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three-county area (Patrick, Floyd, and Carroll). There were no other mills that had this kind of power for production in the area at this time.

The facility included three sets of stones for grinding grain, a sawmill, a planer, and a box factory that were all water-powered. Blackard served local residents as well as such industries as the tobacco companies in North Carolina, for which he made tobacco boxes.

After Jesse Blackard died the property was sold in 1921 to W. A. Cockram. Cockram hired various millers to run the operation. He replaced the wooden dam with a concrete one in 1932. Sometime during the 1930s he added a generator to produce electricity for about twelve households. It was the only available electricity in the area except for a few individuals who produced it for themselves. During the early 1940s electricity came to the area and the utility company bought this part of Cockram's operation.

With better transportation available into the Blue Ridge Mountains and increased mass production, competition caused the mill to decrease production in the 1950s. The mill was purchased by S. H. Mitchell in 1962 and major repairs were completed. Electricity was added to the facility and the sawmill and the box factory were removed. The storage room to the west side was added. It was run as a tourist attraction for approximately fifteen years but again fell into disuse.

In 1984 Double W of Maryland purchased the mill and restored it to excellent working order.

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UTM References:

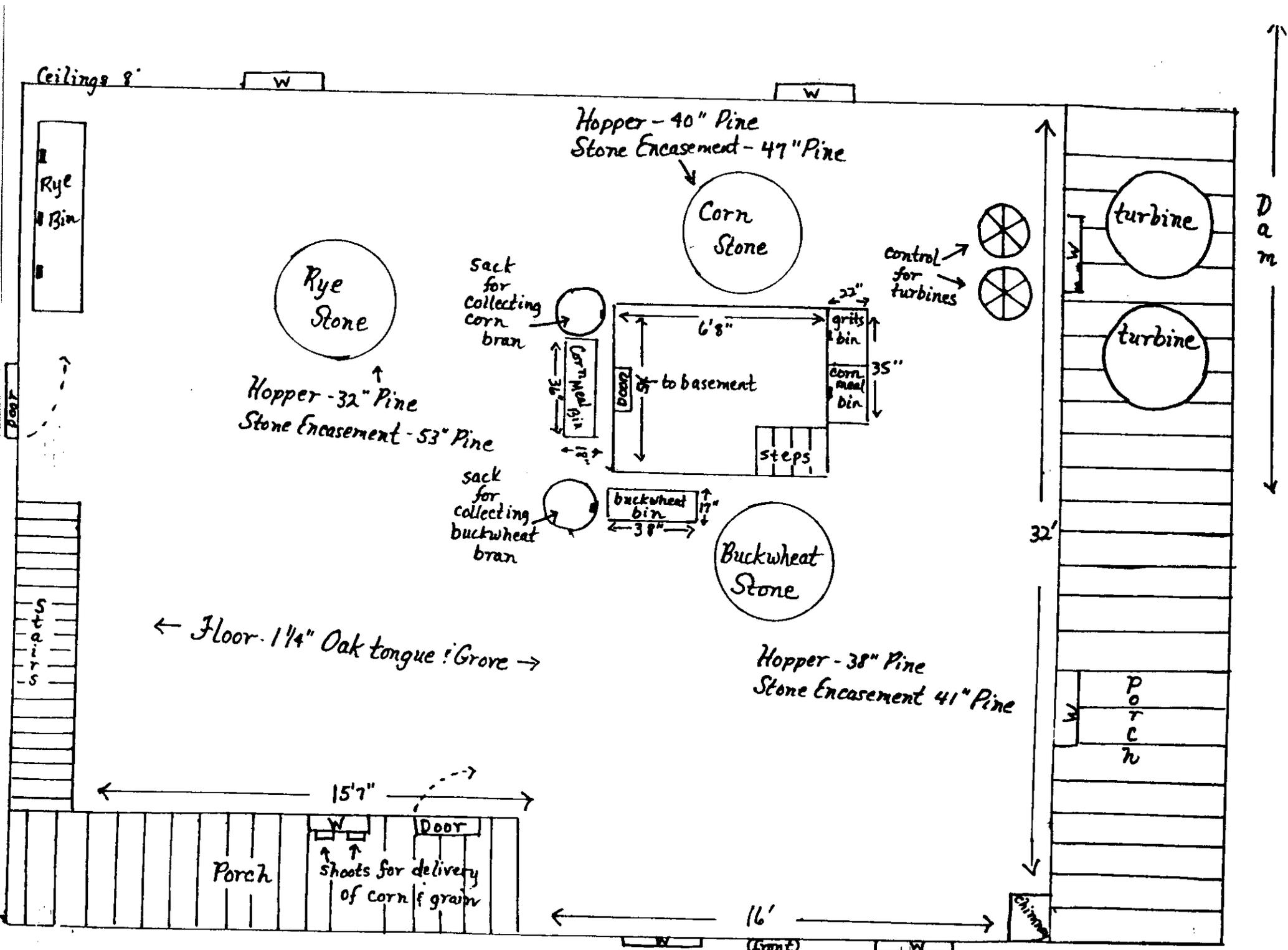
A: 17 | 555560 | 4065890

B: 17 | 555400 | 4065380

C: 17 | 555050 | 4065540

D: 17 | 555050 | 4065620

E: 17 | 555420 | 4065960



Section 1 of Cockram Mill - Level 1
MEADOWS OF DAN YA

NOT TO SCALE
 ↑ N
 → E

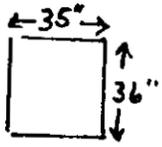
Ceilings 8'3"

W

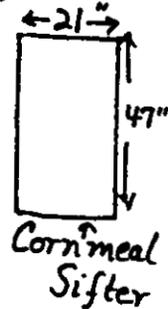
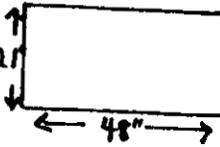
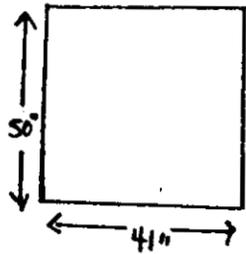
W

Screened-in Storage room

Corn Cleaner
W.J. Sarage
Company
Knoxville, Tn.

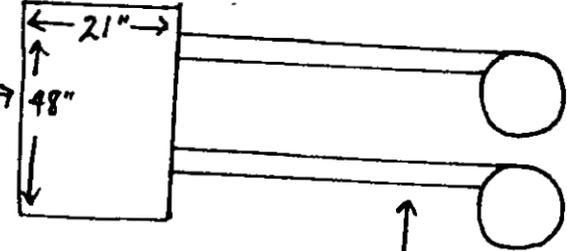


Rye Sifter



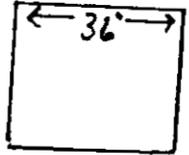
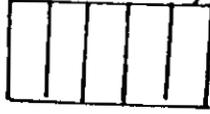
Cornmeal Sifter

Grain Scourer

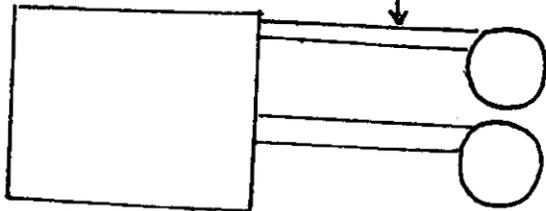
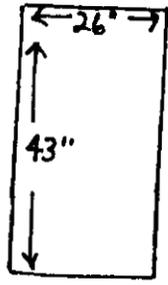


drive wheels & belts

Steps to 3rd level



Buckwheat Sifter



Buckwheat Shucker 1879
Forrester Company, Kansas

Door

Steps

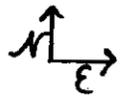
W

W

(front)

Section 1 of Cockram Mill - level 2

NOT TO SCALE

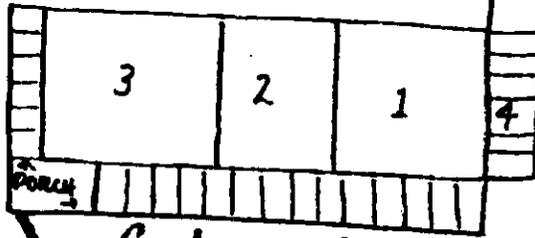


- 1. Grinding Area /
- 2. Bagging Area/Storage /
- 3. Storage
- 4 Turbine Wheels
- 5. Dam

Cabin

Pond on Dan River

island

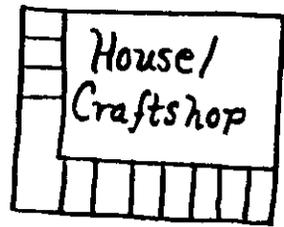


Cockram Mill
Meadows of Daw Ya

walkway ↗

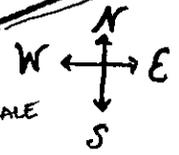
Antique Shop
N/C

← HARDTOP DRIVE : PARKING →

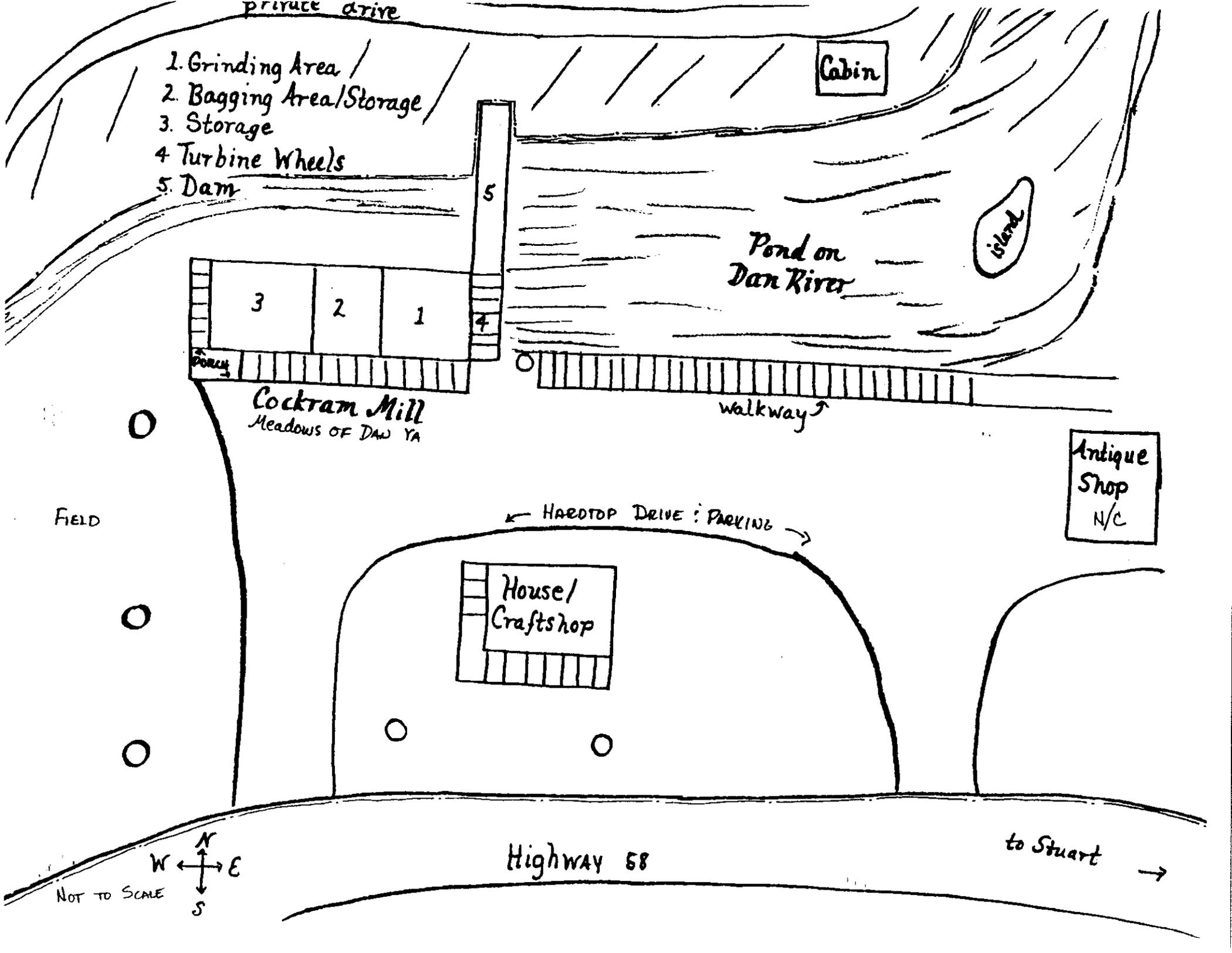


Highway 58

to Stuart →

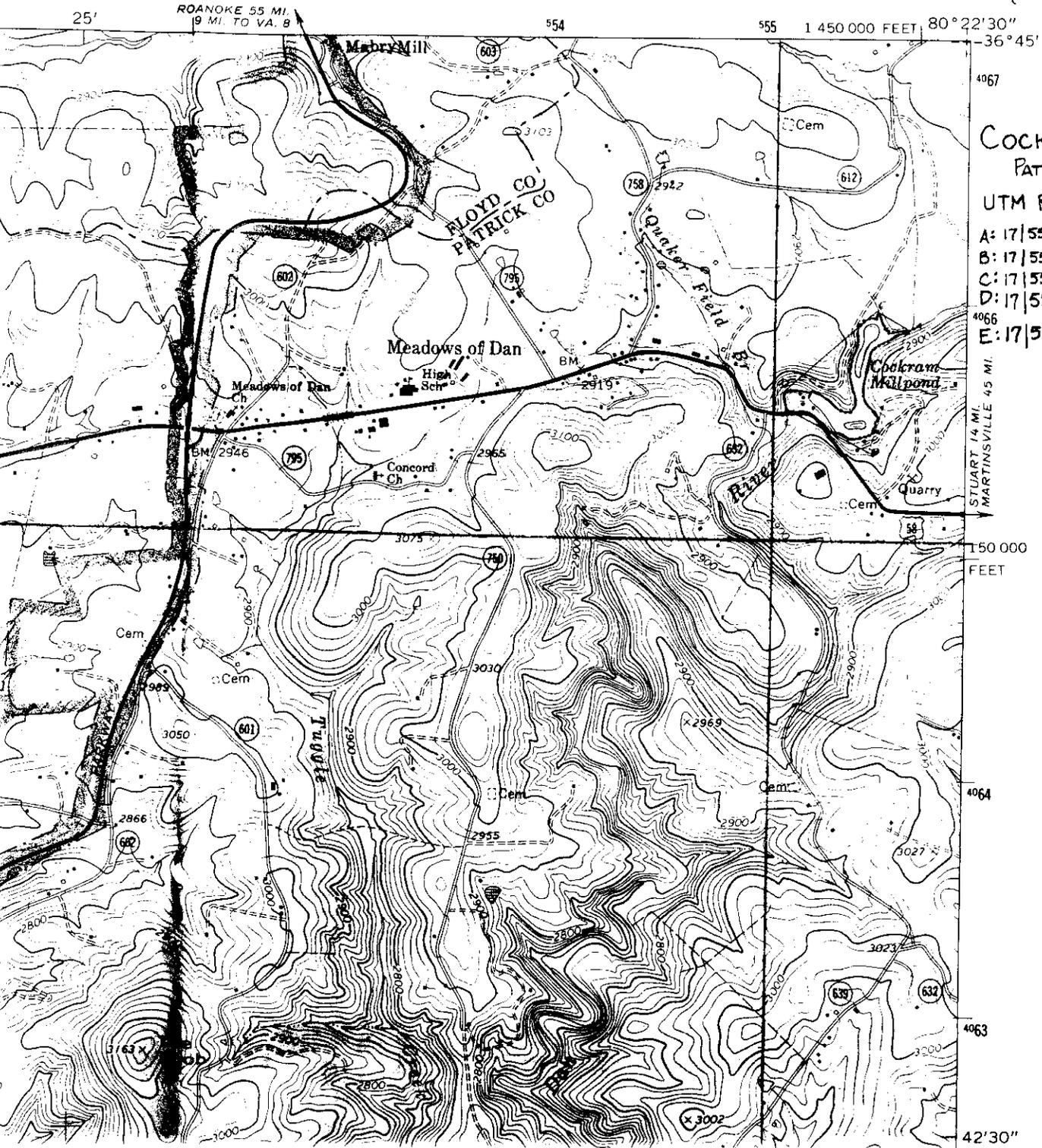


NOT TO SCALE



MEADOWS OF DAN QUADRANGLE
 VIRGINIA
 7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

4957 IV SE
 (WOOL WINE)



COCKRAM MILL
 PATRICK COUNTY

UTM REFERENCES:

- A: 17|555560|4065890
- B: 17|555400|4065380
- C: 17|555050|4065540
- D: 17|555050|4065620
- E: 17|555420|4065960

STUART 14 MI.
 MARTINSVILLE 45 MI.

25' ROANOKE 55 MI. 9 MI. TO VA. 8 54 555 1 450 000 FEET 80° 22' 30" 36° 45'

150 000 FEET

4064

4063

42' 30"